

1988

ANNUAL REPORT

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS



NOTE

This report is primarily an account of the ICRC's work in the field and its activities to promote international humanitarian law. Mention is made of some of the negotiations entered into with a view to bringing protection and assistance to the victims of international and civil wars and internal disturbances and tension. Other negotiations are not mentioned, since the ICRC feels that any publicity would not be in the interest of the victims. Thus, this report cannot be regarded as covering all the institution's efforts worldwide to come to the aid of the victims of conflict.

Moreover, the length of the text devoted to a given country or situation is not necessarily proportional to the magnitude of the problems observed and tackled by the institution. Indeed, there are cases which are a source of grave humanitarian concern but on which the ICRC is not in a position to report because it has been denied permission to take action. By the same token, the description of operations in which the ICRC has great freedom of action takes up considerable space, regardless of the scale of the problems involved.

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GENEVA 1989

FOREWORD

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement exists to alleviate human suffering. It usually has to work in a context of sharp political antagonism and stubborn economic rivalry, or, worse still, bitterly hostile dogmas.

This is not a tale of woe, but the simple truth, as the International Committee of the Red Cross knows from experience. For a century and a quarter it has been doing uphill work in the world's most dangerous "hot spots"; it has witnessed the great problems of the age at close quarters.

In such circumstances, keeping level-headed is not easy. Trying as well to gain allies in its work for humanity, by calling upon governments everywhere to subscribe to its principles, shows an idealism of which the Movement is justly proud.

But when the Red Cross or Red Crescent summons the world to co-operate in its humanitarian work it may harvest grapes of wrath. Its appeals may do nothing to deter leaders concerned only to safeguard their political gains; its approaches to a government may be too timid to have any effect, or so plain-spoken as to provoke irritated rejection.

Nevertheless it has its successes. Now and again States do decide that its humanitarian demands are reasonable, and that they can trust the workers it sends out — men and women who come to relieve suffering as the Movement has done hundreds of times before, deriving the strength they need from their principles alone.

More than ever, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement — especially the ICRC — has to be on the alert lest in these disturbed times vast areas of a region or continent cast aside all respect for human dignity and commit uncontrollable atrocities in their wars.

So often, the ICRC's only ally is its moral prestige. Faced with appalling dilemmas, it constantly has to find a modus vivendi between the vital demands of its humanitarian work and the political and military priorities of warring sides. It never stops trying to narrow the gap between these two extremes, so as to keep inviolate among the disasters of war the little oasis of quiet essential to non-combatants and fighters placed hors de combat.

Fundamentally, Red Cross responsibilities are the same as ever. It is ways and means that are changing. More than ever the Movement needs the international community's support to be able to meet the soaring cost of relief for human suffering and muster the material resources this requires. Only with that support will its men and women be free to work heart and soul at their job of saving lives.

Cornelio SOMMARUGA
President of the ICRC



*Afghanistan:
transporting
relief supplies
to Pul-I-Charki prison
(Kabul).*



(Photo: ICRC/T. Gassmann — THAI 263/34)



*Thai border:
newly arrived
Khmers
are transferred
to Site B camp.*

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

There was a considerable expansion in ICRC activities in 1988. While the institution continued its work along the Khmer-Thai border, where more than 300,000 displaced persons are living in camps, stepped up its involvement in the Philippines and maintained a presence in East Timor, the most significant increase was seen in its activities to help the victims of the conflict situation in Afghanistan. During 1988, the ICRC visited people taken prisoner in connection with the Afghan conflict, as well as detainees in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Viet Nam and China. In addition, its regional delegates carried out missions in some 20 countries in Asia and the Pacific.

For all its operations in Asia and the Pacific region, at the end of 1988 the ICRC had 206 delegates (including medical and administrative staff) and 1,459 locally recruited employees working in five delegations in the following countries: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kampuchea, Thailand and the Philippines. These delegations were supplemented by four regional delegations:

- **New Delhi**, covering India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Maldives;
- **Hong Kong**, covering China, the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Hong Kong and Macao;
- **Hanoi**, covering Viet Nam and Laos;
- **Jakarta**, covering Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, the island States of the southern Pacific, Australia and New Zealand.

Special fund-raising appeals were made for the ICRC's work to help the victims of the Afghan conflict and the Kampuchean conflict as well as for the Philippines and East Timor. The activities of the regional delegations were funded under the ICRC's regular budget.

AFGHAN CONFLICT

All aspects of the ICRC's work in connection with the Afghan conflict expanded considerably in 1988. Increased efforts were required to start up a wide range of activities both in Afghanistan and Pakistan; this called for an increase in staff at the delegations and extra funds to carry out the ICRC's humanitarian mandate.

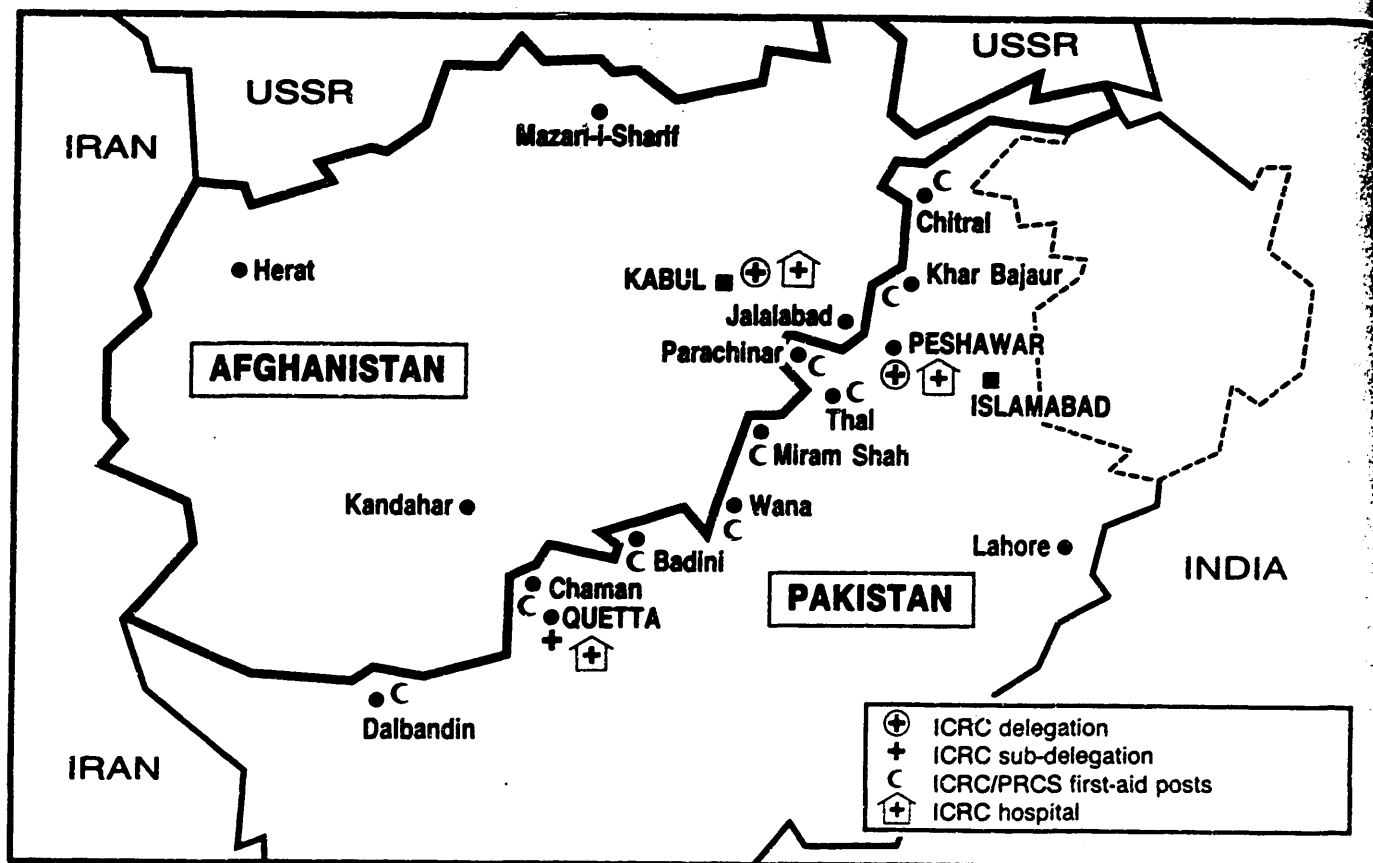
An emergency appeal was made to donors to cover operational expenses and the final budget estimates, revised in June, came to 57,821,400 Swiss francs.

The number of staff at both ICRC delegations was substantially increased during the year. In addition to its 286 local employees, the ICRC delegation in Kabul had a staff of 54 as at 31 December 1988. Approximately half of the medical personnel (18 people) were seconded to the ICRC by the National Societies of the following countries: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany, Finland, France, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden. On the same date, 65 people were working in the Peshawar delegation (including the Quetta sub-delegation), among them 21 from National Societies (Belgium, Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany, Finland, Great Britain, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand and Sweden), plus 812 local employees.

AFGHANISTAN

Discussions took place on several occasions in 1988 with senior officials of the Afghan government. The Minister for Foreign Affairs was received by President Sommaruga at ICRC headquarters in Geneva on 10 March. While on mission in Kabul in June, the Delegate General for Asia and the Pacific had talks with the Prime Minister and with the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Prime Minister again met the head of delegation on 27 December. The main subject of discussion on all these occasions was the development of ICRC activities in Afghanistan, particularly in the area of protection.

The delegates based in Kabul went on four missions outside the capital: in May, the head of delegation and the medical co-ordinator visited Herat, the capital of Herat province in the west of the country, to assess local medical facilities. A second mission in July to distribute medical supplies was followed up in December by a visit to Herat prison. Another mission was sent from Kabul to Mazari-i-Sharif, the capital of the northern province of Balkh. A medical survey similar to the one conducted in Herat was carried out there in August and this was followed in December by prison visits. Further details about these missions may be found under the relevant headings below.



Medical activities

There was a marked increase in medical activities since several medical assistance programmes which had been negotiated with the authorities in 1987 were put into effect in 1988. Of prime importance was the opening in Kabul on 1 October of the **ICRC war surgery hospital**, which has an emergency capacity of up to 150 patients. By the end of the year it had already admitted 213 wounded (not including 1,508 outpatients) and 451 operations had been performed. The hospital, which is under the sole responsibility of the ICRC, had two surgical teams supplied by the Danish and Finnish National Societies and 88 local employees as at 31 December. The ICRC organized a programme of theoretical and practical training for 60 of these local employees.

Another medical project, the **ICRC orthopaedic centre** in Kabul, began to function in 1988. The centre was set up to provide orthopaedic appliances to people who have

had limbs amputated or been left otherwise disabled as a result of the fighting or the explosion of mines. In the first phase crutches were manufactured, then, from March onwards, prostheses and orthoses; in April, the first war amputees were fitted with appliances in the centre, which also carries out repairs. Courses of physiotherapy are also given at the orthopaedic centre and at the war surgery hospital, and the ICRC physiotherapist provides training to local personnel. Under the direction of the ICRC, production staff was recruited and trained locally. During this initial year, the orthopaedic centre produced 1,770 pairs of crutches and 90 prostheses or orthoses.

In addition, the ICRC continued to assist the seven **Afghan Red Crescent dispensaries** in Kabul by providing them with emergency medical supplies and medicines, as needed, for the displaced civilian population. Furthermore, three ICRC nurses toured four of these dispensaries every day to train staff from the National Society in medical care.

On the basis of regular assessments carried out by the medical co-ordinator in the capital's six civilian hospitals, the ICRC distributed emergency medical supplies and medicines for the war wounded. Surveys conducted by the delegation in two provincial towns, Herat and Mazari-i-Sharif, also led to *ad hoc* distributions of medical supplies to help the towns' hospitals cope with the influx of people wounded as a result of the conflict.

Activities for detainees

A mission by the Delegate General for Asia and the Pacific to Kabul in December 1987 resulted in the agreement in principle of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, the Interior and State Security to ICRC visits to people detained in Afghan prisons because of the conflict situation. These visits took place in 1988.

Afghanistan's main prison, Pul-i-Charkhi prison in Kabul, was the first to be visited by ICRC delegates. The visit began on 12 March and continued until the end of August. The delegates saw, in accordance with the ICRC's customary criteria, all sentenced detainees under the jurisdiction of both the Ministry of the Interior (Blocks 3 and 4), and the Ministry of State Security (Blocks 1 and 2). Conversely, they were not allowed to visit, in accordance with ICRC criteria, detainees under the responsibility of the Ministry of State Security who were awaiting trial or under interrogation.

There was a follow-up visit in November and December to detainees under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior in Pul-i-Charkhi prison. In addition, the detainees were given a limited amount of material assistance during the first series of visits.

The ICRC also gained access to the Dar-ul-Tadib detention centre in Kabul where people under 20 years old were being held (penal law and security detainees, awaiting trial or sentenced). After this visit, which took place in October, all the young people held in the centre received parcels from the ICRC in November containing toilet articles, food and educational and recreational items. There was a follow-up visit to Dar-ul-Tadib at the end of December.

Two provincial prisons were also visited by the delegates while on mission outside the capital. In September, they went to Mazari-i-Sharif prison in the north of the country where they visited, in accordance with the ICRC's customary criteria, several categories of detainees all of whom were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior. After the visit, blankets and clothing were distributed. In December, the delegates visited detainees

held under the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior in Herat prison in the west of the country. Limited assistance was provided to these detainees.

Visits to persons detained by the Afghan opposition were conducted from Pakistan and are described under the corresponding heading below.

Tracing Agency

The visits to prisoners led to a marked increase in the activities of the Tracing Agency in Afghanistan. Most of the Red Cross messages (1,600 in 1988) exchanged through the ICRC were written by detainees held by the government and by the opposition forces or sent to them by members of their families. Moreover, tracing requests were made in respect of a growing number of people reported missing and presumed detained, as well as inhabitants of Kabul whose relatives abroad had no news of them. The Agency also issued 29 travel documents to Afghans who had been granted refugee status in third countries.

Dissemination

With the arrival in Kabul in May of a delegate specialized in the subject, the delegation began to develop dissemination programmes. Particular emphasis was placed on the nature and activities of the ICRC and the Movement, as an indirect means of ensuring the safety of the delegates as they were going about their humanitarian work. In addition to dissemination carried out as part of other activities at the Afghan Red Crescent dispensaries, the orthopaedic centre, civilian hospitals and prisons, talks were given to students, secondary schoolchildren and Afghan doctors and nurses. Furthermore, material on the fundamental principles of the Movement and the ICRC's criteria for action were printed in Pashtu and Dari. Messages were also broadcast in these two languages on the BBC and Deutsche Welle shortwave networks, announcing the whereabouts of delegates travelling in the provinces.

PAKISTAN

The Pakistan Minister for Foreign Affairs was received by the ICRC Vice-President in April and this was followed in May by a visit from the Minister of Health. The meetings provided an opportunity to take stock of what the ICRC was doing and wished to do in Pakistan, in particular making visits to Afghans detained in Pakistan prisons in connection with the conflict situation. This issue was also